

# “Rigvedic God Indra”

## Understanding the Contexts of *His* Creation, the Decoration, and the Dissension

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**Introduction:** In the ancient Sanskrit Literature, there exists significant variation in description about God **Indra**. In **Four Vedas**, **He** has been projected as the **Supreme Deity** of the Vedic People possessing infinite power. But the **Puranas** and the **Epics** composed after the **Vedas**, do portray **Him** as the **King of the Gods** who needs to work under the guidance of the Three Prime Deities, and those are; **Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh**.

In **Rigved**, the primarily role of **Indra** is to rescue the rain-clouds from the clutches of the Demon **Vritra** by killing him or removing the main obstacle/**Ahi** who has blocked the regular flow of water into the rivers (various streams flowing from the mountain form the main source of water for the rivers) using the most potent weapon **Vajra/Thunderbolt**; the phenomenon of nature that occurs prior to or during rain-fall. Hence, **Indra** is generally termed as the thunder and Storm God.

One-time subduing **Vritra** does not provide permanent solution to the Water Problem faced by the rigvedic People, and the mythical story of “**Indra killing Vritra**” gets repeated over and over again in all the Ten Mandalas of **Rigved**. Therefore, by default it becomes the most important topic of the Rigvedic composition. The central theme of **Rigved** is “The Struggle for Water”.

**Rigved** provides sufficient information about the basic Plot / background of the story, the description about the Important Characters involved in the act (the main Hero **Indra**, supported by other Deities such as Agni, Vishnu, Bruhaspati, Varuna, Mitra, Pushan, Rudra, Asvins, Maruts Parjanya etc, and the real Villain **Vritra/Ahi**), the setting of War between them; and everything has been verbally illustrated in an ancient Sanskrit language (use of imagery/symbolic language / metaphors / similes to portray the central idea) by the several Singers who composed Ten Mandalas consisting of 1028 Suktas/Hymns over a very long period, and also maintained continuity in explaining the on-going mythical conflict in a Poetic Style.

In the present essay, an attempt has been made to understand the rise of **Indra** to the **Numero Uno position** or as the most celebrated God of **Rigved**, and then the cause of disagreement about **Him** among the People as reflected in the late Mandalas of **Rigved**.

The main source of information for the present essay is **Rigved**.

## I. Indra, the Cause and the Outcome of the Creation:

As per the Rigvedic literature, before the birth of **Indra**, the horrifying demon called as **Vritra/Ahi** had taken all the water available on Earth in his captivity. No God from the Earlier Generation could stand in front of dreadful **Ahi/Vritra**, but all the Gods vanished from the scene leaving all the living beings at the mercy of dreaded **Vritra/Ahi**. This has been explained by the Composer in the verse of Mandala-8.

# **Rv-8.93,14** : When in their terror all the Gods shrank from the Dragon's furious might,  
Fear of the monster fell on them.

# -symbol in the text denotes Griffith Translation [1].

In true sense, the fearsome character **Vritra/Ahi** described in **Rigved** is nothing but the personification of **Drought**. The text indicates that, well before the birth of **Indra**, **Vritra** already existed in the rigvedic world. The two verses from **Mandala-8** (given below) do explain proper sequence of the **Three Major Events** that occur prior to the commencement of composition of **Rigved**.

**Rv-8.89,5**: yajjāyathā apūrvya **maghavan vṛ trahatyāya** |  
tat pṛ thivīmaprathayastadastabhñā uta dyām ||

# When thou, **unequalled Maghavan, wast born to smite the Vrtras dead**,  
Thou spreadest out the spacious earth and didst support and prop the heavens.

**Rv-8.89,6** : tat te **yajño** ajāyata tadarka uta hasṛtiḥ |  
tad viśvamabhibhūrasi yajjātaṃ yacca jantvam ||

# There was the **sacrifice** produced for **thee, the laud, and song of joy**,  
Thou in thy might surpassest all, all that now is and yet shall be.

**1. Appearance of Vritra** : Real Drought like condition developed in the area (Sapt-Sindhu region).

where the ancestors of the rigvedic Priests were living, resulting in suffering for all.

**2. Creation of Indra**: As the Old/ Pre-rigvedic Deities failed to meet the challenge posed by **Vritra**, that culminated into creation of special Warrior God **Indra** to counter the effect of **Vritra / Drought**.

**3. Formulation of Yajna**: **Yajna** ritual was specifically shaped to praise Indra and other Deities to get some favour from them (Deities) mainly, to overcome the effect of **Vritra/Drought**. Later on,

the same was used to obtain the gifts like cows and other animals, the precious metal/ gold, as well as for achieving victory in the wars.

During the pre-rigvedic period, God **Varuna** was designated as the **Prime Deity**, and supposed to be directly responsible for the protection of life on Earth. At that time, the ancestors of rigvedic Priests had divided the world into two parts i.e. Heaven and Earth. **Varuna** was presumed to live in Heaven, and from there believed to monitor all the activities of the Earth. As Rain falls from Sky, it was considered that **Varuna** was directly responsible for providing Celestial Water in the form of Rain to the Earth, and its land based water management through the various channels/storehouses such rivers, ponds, seas or oceans. Additionally, **Varuna** was regarded as the Upholder of Moral Values, and responsible for personal and social behaviour (Rta) of everyone.

But when a Dry spells/Drought like condition prevailed over a very long period, then the people would have started questioning the beliefs of the Priests who were considered to be the knowledgeable persons in the society. Despite praying to **Varuna** for many days, when situation did not improve, the pre-rigvedic Priests would have felt public pressure to do something.

Probably after several brain storming sessions, using their imagination, the pre-rigvedic Priests, just to pacify the agitated people, first created invisible Evil Character, **Vritra/Ahi** who was imagined to occupy mid-space/atmosphere, and tried to convince the people that due to presence of **Vritra** in the sky, rainwater from **Varuna's** place was not reaching the Earth.

Having described **Vritra** as a powerful demon, upon request from the Leaders, the Priests would have started searching for the solution to the problem. As **Varuna** was ineffective to control an atmospheric demon **Vritra**, then they created a new Deity **Indra**, intentionally made **Him** very strong and aggressive in nature to fight the War with **Vritra**, and also placed him in Mid-space/Air so as to defeat the atmospheric demon **Vritra** in an anticipation that **Indra** would to bring desired changes in the prevailing conditions.

Now coming to the story of birth of mythical god **Indra**, among the all Rigvedic Poets, **Vamadeva**, the Lead Composer of **Mandala-4**, gives better account of **His** Birth.

**Rv-4.18,1** conveys that all gods were born from the normal route, i.e., from mother's womb and at the time of delivery, the position of their mother (Earth/ Aditi) was very similar to “a mother who is about to deliver a baby” generally made to rest on her back at the time of delivery.

But the verse **Rv-4.18,2** informs that at the time of birth of **Indra**, due to severe labour, his

mother moved to one side and released him in the world with the great difficulty. In other words, **Indra** was born through the non-conventional path. In the same verse, the Singer claims that, earlier no-one had born, and in future also nobody would take birth in the same way as that of birth of **Indra** as it is an unique case. It means, **Indra** is born in the unexceptional circumstances.

**Rv-4.18,4** intimates us that “**Mother bore Indra**” in her womb for several autumns, indirectly means that the pre-rigvedic Priests needed a very long period to give final shape to the distinguished character **Indra**, and the people had to bear the onslaught of Vritra/Drought for many years. It means that to conceive and develop an idea of **Indra** or to complete the formation of character **Indra**, the Priests needed a very long **Incubation / Gestation period**. Here the **Incubation or Gestation Period** denotes “mental synthesis for several months or years”.

The verse **Rv-4.22,4** tells us that at the time of birth of **Indra**, there was disorder in the world, and **Vritra** made all living beings to suffer for a very long time.

# **Rv-4.22,4**: Before the High God, at his birth, heaven trembled, earth, many floods and all the precipices.

When the people and other living beings suffered

Then comes **Indra**, more powerful God than existed before to save the people from torture of **Vritra**.

# **Rv-8.93,15** : Then he was my Defender, then, Invincible, whose foe is not,

The Vritra-slayer showed his might.

In this way, **Indra**, the Ultimate Thunder and Storm God, the King of all Gods, and the All Seasons Trouble Shooter of the living beings came into existence. In the Rigvedic World, the situation prevailed at that time would have been very similar to any country/state wherein, we see the presence of a regular **Police Force** (represented by **Varuna** and **his Team of the Early Deities of Rigved**) to manage the daily law and order, and a special **Military Force** (represented by **Indra**) to take on the Enemies (**Vritra/Ahi**) of the country.

Then the fundamental question is, **Why does Indra need to kill Vritra often?**

In the verse, **Rv-4.17,19**; the Composer has mentioned that **Indra slayed many Vritras**. It actually hints at the shortfall in the regular rain at many places, and hence the rise in severity of Drought (**Vritra**) day-by-day, and year over year, prior to; and at the time of composition of the Five Early Mandalas of **Rigved** when the people were experiencing the hardship.

As a matter of fact, **Indra** would have been shaped by the Pre-rigvedic Priests through the several rounds of deliberations and discussions held among them, or through many brain-storming sessions purposely conducted for a very longer duration, when that region was reeling under the severe Drought (**Vritra**).

It is very interesting to note that in **Rigved** “**Indra** is described as an **Anthropomorphic** (Super-person) Character, whereas **Vritra** is depicted as a **Zoo-morphic** (Serpent/Dragon/Snake) Entity”. Even the **Dasas** and the **Dasyus** who frequently troubled the **Priests** while conducting **Yajnas** at the several places, have been identified as **A-Manusha/Non-human** Characters. Many Rigvedic hymns exhibit that the **Priests** requesting **Indra** to neutralize both of them in **His** typical style, very similar to smiting **Vritra**.

Now, coming to the point of outcome of the creation of a new character **Indra**; it definitely gave some hope and mental satisfaction to the Rigvedic Priests. The members of Priestly community engaged themselves in performing Yajnas for years together with the hope that on someday, situation would change dramatically, **Vritra/Drought** would disappear, river **Saraswati** would start flowing in all seasons, and the Happy Days would come back again. The Priests did only that thing, they were capable to do, praying the Gods of that time.

Same thing has been explained using the **Sanskrit Subhashita** given below.

आशा नाम मनुष्याणां काश्चिदाश्चर्यशृङ्खला ।  
यया बद्धा प्रधावन्ति मुक्तास्तिष्ठन्ति कुत्रचित् ॥

**Ashaa naama manushyaanaam kaashchidaashcharyashrunkhala.**  
**yayaa baddhaa pradhaavanti muktaastishthanti kutrachit.**

#### **Explanation:**

The life of the common people is bound by the most surprising but **invisible chain of hope**. Those who are bound by this invisible chain, run freely but with some purpose, strive hard, keep chasing a new goal in an adverse situation with the expectation to achieve the best in the life. But those who are not bound by it, are generally found to be relaxing and live well contented life without expecting more. It means, they take the life, the way it comes to them.

From the above discussion, now it is crystal clear that, “ **in the rigvedic country of that time, if there were no “Vritras/Drought”, then there would not have been “Indra and Yajna” as well**”. It means, **Indra** was created for a **Very Special Mission**, i.e.; to finish **Vritra/Drought**.

As far as the Pre-rigvedic and the Rigvedic Sages are concerned, the design of character **Indra** is “ a dream comes true” event, and hence they all fell madly in love with this character.

## II. Indra, the Purpose of Decoration:

As discussed earlier, **Indra** is the **mental product** of the Pre-rigvedic Priests, who by birth is regularly at the wars with imaginary demon **Vritra**. That is why, in all **Ten Mandalas of Rigved**, more than one fourth of the total 1028 hymns of **Rigved** are addressed to this Fantastic Character. Since inception of Rigved (see “**Appendix-A**” for the first hymn of Rigvedic Composition), **He** has been designated as the “**Supreme God**”, and several Rigvedic Composers have tried their level best to portray **Indra** in such a way that, **He** would appear more Colourful, very Attractive, and Physically as well as Mentally Stronger than any other Rigvedic Deity.

Actually, keeping the capability of fictional demon **Vritra/Drought** in mind, from the beginning to the end of Rigvedic Composition, several Poets have enthusiastically carried out the **Image Building Exercise** mainly for **Indra**, and the same got reflected in their compositions. At some places, the Singers have symbolically explained the important characteristics of **Indra**. In some verses, the Poets have used figurative language and imagery to make the text more attractive.

On the basis of the information available in **Rigved**, in the following paragraphs, one by one in brief, we shall see, the Three Prominent Characteristics of **Indra**; firstly the **Main Assignments of Rigvedic Indra**, secondly the **External Agents** that make **Him** to look Mightier than Other Gods, and thirdly the **Various Honours/Titles** bestowed on **Him** by the Singers from time to time to project **Him** as the **Most Efficient Ruler** of the World, and also the **Supreme God**.

### A. The Key Roles of Indra:

Rigvedic literature defines three main roles of **Indra**, and the order of importance of the same is as given below.

**1. Slaying of Vritra** : It is the most critical function of **Indra**, as **He** is intentionally created to overcome the effect of **Vritra/Drought**. In all Mandalas of **Rigved**, the mythical story of “**Indra killing Vritra**” does prominently figure. It forms the very foundation of the Rigvedic Text.

**2. Defeating the Personal Enemies of the Priests** : It is the second most important function of **Indra**. The **Dasas**, the **Dasyus**, the **Panis**, the **Valas** are some of the personal enemies of the Priests who regularly trouble them either while performing Yajnas or kidnap their cows on some occasions (myth?), then **Indra** locates the cows and rescues them from the foes.

**3. Assistance to the Warrior Class People** : **Mandala-4** onwards, we find clear references of **Indra** being invoked by the Priests for extending **His** helping hands to the **Bharata Kings** at the time of wars with their opponents. During the period of Mandala-2 and 3 (the first two Mandalas), there was no direct contact of the Priests/Bharatas with any member of the Five Tribes.

## **B. The Main External Agents that improve the capabilities of Indra:**

Even though the Priests have projected **Indra** as the most formidable **God of Rigved**, and frequently defined His strength and aggressiveness in terms of **Vrishaba/ Vrasana or Bull**, still **He** lacks courage and conviction to take on the **Vritra** on **His** own. Therefore, the Poets have identified the **Three Vital External Agents** without whom, **Indra** would not have carried out **His** assigned tasks to the satisfaction of the Singers, and they are as under.

**1. Soma, the Drink :** **Soma** is the divine drink of the Rigvedic Gods. The two verses **Rv-3.48,2;** and **Rv-7.98,3** taken from the Two Different Early Mandalas tell us the same story; i.e., as soon as **Indra** takes birth, **He** drinks **Soma**. It also means, well before the birth of **Indra**, **Soma** Juice was already known to the Priests, and they were regularly consuming the same. In other words, mythical God **Indra** can consume **Soma** only when, it exists prior to his conceptual birth.

As per Vedic myth, consumption of **Soma** gives **Indra** desired strength and courage to fight against **Vritra**, and immortality as well. Since appearance of **Soma** and **Indra** as a pair, is one of the most popular combinations present in all Ten Rigvedic Mandalas, both are treated as inseparable.

**2. Vajra, the Weapon :** As per the text, to kill devil **Vritra**, **Indra** uses very special but uncommon weapon; **Vajra/thunderbolt**. One myth says **Tvastar** the maker of divine instruments had specially fabricated the most powerful weapon for **Indra**. Another story tells that the **Vajra/thunderbolt** was created from the bones of Rishi **Dadhichi** (reference is found in the late Mandala verse: **Rv-1.84,13**).

It is described that **Vajra** is as strong as Metal, and has many sharp points/edges so that when it is thrown at the dragon **Vritra**, it would hit Him hard, irrespective of its angle of attack.

**3. Chariot, the Vehicle:** Rigvedic literature intimates us that **Indra** uses a very special vehicle drawn by the Two Tawny Steeds, called as **Ratha**. Since **Ratha** flies at the speed of light, **Indra** is reachable everywhere instantly, and this aspect practically makes **Indra** to be omnipresent.

In sum, using their lofty imaginations, the Poets have enhanced effectiveness of their most favourite God **Indra**, and also made **Him** omnipotent, so that **Vritra/Drought**, the universal enemy of all living beings would not escape from **His** sight or hide anywhere in the world.

In short, these three outside factors aid **Indra** in **destroying the enemies of the Priests**.

### C. Various Honours/ Titles Conferred on Indra:

Many Rigvedic Composers have lavishly praised **Indra** in their composition, and based on the situations, they coined new terms to suit the occasion, and then honoured Him with very special Names/Titles in the composed poems. Some selected, but important honours bestowed by the Poets in their compositions are discussed below.

#### a. Indra, the Real Hero:

Basic Qualities that are needed to qualify **Indra** as the **Warrior God** are described as under.

**Shatakratu** : 'having hundred powers'

**Sakra** : “powerful”

**Vrushabha/Vrushan** : “mighty” or “as aggressive as bull”

**Vajrabrit** : “bearing the Vajra/thunderbolt” (depicts Firepower)

**Vajrivat** or **Vajrin** : “armed with the Vajra/thunderbolt”

#### b. Indra, the Multi-faceted Character/ the All Rounder:

Some features of **Indra** that highlight **His** other special attributes are mentioned below.

**Vritrahan** : Vritra-slayer

**Purandara** : Destroyer of the forts/colonies of enemy

**Ajara**: Non-aging character

**Purva** : Very old/ancient

**Maghavan** : the generous, liberal, bountiful, bestower of Gifts

**Sachipati** : Lord of Mighty

**Vajradaksina** : Holding the Vajra /thunderbolt in his right hand

**Satyasya** : Son of truth.

**Apsujit** : Winner of waters

**Soma-pa** and **Soma-pavan** : Soma Drinker (enhances Strength and stamina)

It seems that, depending on the situations, the Composers have coined different adjectives to decorate **Indra** with the new Degrees, very similar to popular phrase “ Dress for the Occasion”.



### c. **Indra, the Perfect Ruler and the Chief Controller :**

**Rigved** intimates us that as soon as **Indra** is born, **He** immediately takes necessary steps to bring the prevailing situation under **His** control. Based on this assumption, some Singers have brought out **His** Leadership Qualities using some special phrases that are given below.

- Universal monarch
- Self-dependent sovereign
- King of the whole world/ Ultimate king
- King of dynamic things and all creatures
- Leader of Deities/Divine and human races
- King of the Kings

Additionally, in the verse **Rv-8.92,3**; the Composer has projected **Indra** as the **Dancer**.

Despite possessing **Vajra** the most potent weapon, **Rigved** intimates us that, on some occasions, **Indra** has to take the help of his close friends like **Maruts**, **Visnu**, and **Agni** to smite **Vritra**.

To conclude the discussion on the topic, it can be said that, since inception of **Rigved**, various Poets have tried to project **Indra** as the **Storm** and **Warrior** God, whose basic purpose of arrival is to free the world from the strong grip of dragon **Vritra** as the latter had taken complete water of the world in **his** captivity. Keeping this thing in mind, the Priests came up with an idea of a new, but an Independent God who would go anywhere to fight the war with **Vritra**, and save the world from water deficiency.

In their compositions, the Rigvedic Composers have specifically described **Indra** as Omnipresent, and Omnipotent God, who upon praise, does the needful for **His** worshippers. As per the earlier belief, the demon **Vritra** had captured the space existing between the Heaven and the Earth, causing Drought-like situation in the pre-rigvedic world. Thus, an Atmospheric God- **Indra** has been created to kill an Atmospheric demon- **Vritra**, using an Atmospheric Weapon- **Vajra/Thunderbolt**.

The conceptual design and the decoration of Magnificent **Indra** clearly manifest that, **He** was purposefully shaped by the Pre-rigvedic Priests to nullify effect of **Vritra**/Drought, and the same trend was continued by their descendants while composing all Ten Mandalas. It also proves present-day well-known proverb, “**Necessity is the Mother of Invention**”.

### III. Indra, the Reasons for Dissension;

#### Back-ground of the Dispute

**Rigved** tells us that, the spectacular character **Indra** is evolved through the lengthy thought processes, and replaced **Varuna**, the Prime God of the Pre-rigvedic People immediately after birth. As per **Rigved**, God **Varuna** was the Emperor of the world earlier, who was directly responsible for implementation of the Eternal Laws, monitoring all the activities of living beings, and providing celestial water in the form of the rain as well as its land based water management. But the appearance of **Vritra/Drought** spoiled the reputation of **Varuna**, and the people started raising doubts about **His** capability. As discussed elsewhere, then **Indra** is shaped to counter **Vritra**.

It should be borne in mind that, **Varuna** is the regulator of water, who used to carry out routine task peacefully; but **Indra** is the rescuer of waters, who has to fight the war against **Vritra** and then free the same from the latter's captivity. Being cool and self-controlled character, confrontation is not the part of **Varuna's** nature. But **Indra** is purposely devised as the **Born Fighter**.

From the appearance of the names of the rivers, it is generally agreed that except some part of Mandala-4, all other Early Mandalas (Mandala-2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 are treated as the Five Early Mandalas) were composed in the region located to east of river **Sindhu**. In fact, river **Saraswati** prominently figures in the Mandala-2, 3, 6, and 7; and has been frequently lauded in these Four Early Mandalas (actually, there is no place for river **Sindhu** in Mandala-2, 3, 6, and 7).

But the verse **Rv-6.61,14** taken from the hymn dedicated to river **Saraswati** exhibits its pathetic condition at the time of composition.

**Rv-6.61,14:** sarasvatyabhi no nes mī vasyo māpa spharīh m payasā mā na ādhak |  
jus masva nah m sakhyā veśyā ca mā tvat ks metrān myaran māni ghanma ||

# Guide us, **Saraswati**, to glorious treasure: **refuse us not thy milk, nor spurn us from thee**.

Gladly accept our friendship and obedience: **let us not go from thee to distant countries**.

Even other verse from **Mandala-6**, **Rv-6.49,7** symbolically explains (see **Appendix-”B”**) that river **Saraswati** was the rain-fed river, and hence at that time, it was already a seasonal river.

Therefore, it can be said that, presence of **Real Drought** like condition or shortfall in rain (**Vritra**) on the bank of river **Saraswati**, factually led to creation of fictional god **Indra**.

In the Five Late Mandalas (Mandala-5, 8, 9, 1, and 10 are considered as the Five Late Mandalas), we find presence of several names of the rivers who are the western tributaries of river

**Sindhu**. Hence, it is generally accepted that the major parts of each of these Five Late Mandalas was composed in the territory located west of river **Sindhu**.

Then the fundamental question is, **after the war of the Ten Kings, why did the Priests relocate themselves to west of river Sindhu?**

In all probabilities, having experienced scarcity of water in the upstream area adjoining river **Saraswati** in **Purus's** country, (the Poet in the verse **Rv-7.96,2** has noted that “Purus live on the two banks of river **Saraswati**, when both are grassy/green, means during rainy season only”), keeping this ground reality in mind, the Rigvedic Priests would have decided to shift from the east to west of river **Sindhu**, during the composition of second part of **Mandala-5** itself.

On the contrary, in the hymns of the Five Late Mandalas, there is no single reference of paucity of water in the river **Sindhu** and **her western tributaries**. It means, the rivers of western zone were flowing throughout the year. As there was no effect of **Vritra**/Drought in that area, the condition prevailed to west of river **Sindhu** made **Indra** practically **Jobless**. **Rv-8.48.11** conveys that “**after moving to west of river Sindhu, the bad days of the Priests are over**”, and **Rv-8.100,7** informs that “**Vritra is no more seen in that area**”. Additionally, after the **War of Ten Kings**, there is no reference of any major war among the Rigvedic Tribes in the Late Mandalas.

In this way, **Indra**, an **Ideal God** of the Five Early Mandalas of the Rigvedic Community, becomes an **Idle God** in **Mandala-8**, (**Rv-8.100,5** indicates that **Indra** resting on his back, means sitting idle). Some Late hymns of **Mandala-8**, hints that, at some point out time, some unidentified Persons/ Poets raised the questions about the very existence of **Indra** and **His** regular glorification as well. The verses from the hymns **Rv-8.96** to **Rv-8.100** do depict that there was conflict between the two groups of the Priests, and **Indra** was the only cause for the same. This is manifested by the content of the two verses **Rv-8.96,7** and **Rv-8.96,19**, wherein, the **Singer** has symbolically brought out the incidence that “**Other Gods** have left the company of **Indra**”, actually means, some rigvedic people took strong objection to the very existence of **Indra**, but did not have problem with other Gods. Most probably, after a clash of words, a section of **Bhrugus**, and the **Anus** would have decided to leave the Rigvedic territory. The migration of a section of the rigvedic people/the Aryas would have occurred from the North-west region of the Indian Sub-continent to present-day Afghanistan possibly after the composition of **Mandala-8**. Then the rebels who moved out of the rigvedic country, would have established an independent Avestan Culture in West Persia/BMAC, wherein they went back to the Old Gods like **Varuna**, **Mitra**, **Agni**, **Vata** **Vayu**, but purposely neglected rigvedic gods **Indra** and **his close Friends; Maruts, Visnu, Brihaspati** etc.

The most striking observation here is, the **Avestan People** did include the rigvedic features

like **Yajna/Yasna**, **Agni (Azar/Atar)**, **Soma (Haoma)**, **Varuna (Asura Medha/Ahura Mazda)** in their culture, but completely ignored **Indra** who was shaped after the effect of **Vritra**, but prior to formulation of **Yajna** (see the verses **Rv-8.89,5-6**; already discussed in the Part-I of present essay).

Some rigvedic Scholars emphatically state that mythical god **Indra** is the creation of **Indo-Iranian Tribe/the Aryans** when they lived together somewhere in **BMAC** region or in an ancient Persia/Iran. In reality, **Indra** is treated as the Supreme Deity in **Rigved**; the text composed in the North-west region of Indian Sub-continent, whereas in **Avesta**, **He** has been described as the insignificant Demon (**Indra's** role is exactly reversed in **Avesta**, and has been mentioned only twice in the text), and status-wise also, there is no comparison between demon **Indra** of **Avesta**, and demon **Vritra** of **Rigved**. Hence, there is no substance in saying that **Indra** the Supreme God of **Rigved**, was shaped outside the **Indian Sub-continent**. Straightforward solution to the problem is that, the Rigvedic character **Indra** would have become a bone of contention between the two warring factions. One section of the Priests kept worshipping **Him** despite the fact that **He** had no role in making ample water available to west of river **Sindhu**, but other camp of the Dissidents/Protestors firmly decided to reject **Indra** as the god, split and went away from the hardliners way of thinking, and gave no place to **Him** in their newly developed philosophy.

This has been hinted at in the hymn **Rv-10.124** of the Last Mandala, wherein the three important Rigvedic Gods **Agni**, **Varuna**, and **Soma** are depicted to be present with **Pitre Asura/Father Asura**, the **Main God** of the people of **Other Lineage/** or the **Strangers** [1], who too perform **Yajna**, but in a different way than the Rigvedic People. The Poet of the hymn, on behalf of **Indra**, requests them (three Gods) to come back to their original place, and join **Indra** to kill **Vritra**, so as to bring prosperity in the region. It also reveals the fact that, still the Singer is very possessive of an age old story “**Indra Killing Vritra**”. It manifests his firm faith in ancestors' view.

There is no doubt that **Father Asura** mentioned in the hymn **Rv-10.124** is actually **Ahura Mazda** of **Avesta**, and the **People of Other Lineage/the Strangers** could be the descendants of the rebels who had left the rigvedic country a long back (after Mandala-8), probably lived in the region located to west of rigvedic territory (present-day Afghanistan/Iran).

### **Discord at the time of “Birth of Indra”**

As discussed earlier, hymn **Rv-4.18** from **Mandala-4** narrates the story of “**Birth of Indra**”. The verse from the said hymn hints at an occurrence of disagreement at the time of “**His Birth**”.

**Rv-4.18,11:** uta **mātā** mahiṣ am anv avenad amī tvā jahatiputra devāḥ |

athābravīd **vṛ tramindro** haniṣ yansakhe **viṣ ṇ** ovitaraṃ vi kramasva ||

# *Then to her mighty Child the Mother turned her, saying, My son, **these Deities forsake thee.***

*Then **Indra** said, about to slaughter **Vritra**, **O my friend Visnu**, stride full boldly forward.*

**Interpretation:** Mother of **Indra** reminds **Him** that at the time of **His** birth, other **Deities** had abandoned **Him**. Then **Indra** takes the help of his **friend Visnu** to slay **Vritra**.

**Logically speaking**, it is not the **old Gods** who were present prior to **birth of Indra** moved away from the scene, but **Some Undefined People** who had no belief in newly created character **Indra**, would have left the company of the Priests. Probably, king **Nahusha** would not have shown any interest in celebrating birth of **Indra**. **Nahusa** and his followers would have discarded **Indra** at the time of **His** creation itself. Therefore, the Composers of the Early Mandalas have intentionally termed his descendants- the **Five Tribe** as the “**an-Indra**” or **Indra-less, Adeva/Godless People** in some verses. The feature described in the verse, **Rv-4.18,11**, (some Gods leave **Indra** alone) is also found in the two verses of **Mandala-8; Rv-8.96,7** and **Rv-8.96,19** (discussed earlier).

The verse **Rv-4.18,11** also points out God **Visnu** is the **friend** of **Indra**, a free mover everywhere (**three strides**) was already existing prior to birth of **Indra** or created along with **Indra**.

It should be noted here that, in the **Avestan literature**, there is no place for **Maruts, Visnu, Brihaspati**, the Rigvedic Gods who are generally identified as the **Close Friends of Indra**.

There is a proverb in **Marathi** language; कानामागून आली आणि तिखट झाली /kanamagun aali aani tikhat zali. Its practical meaning is, “ One comes from nowhere, and dominates others or when a girl from other family becomes Daughter-in-law, starts dictating the Seniors”. Similar thing would have been felt by **Nahusa**, who did not like the dominance of **Indra** over the Old Gods. Additionally, the declaration of the pre-rigvedic Priests “**Indra as the king of all Kings**” would have hurt **Nahusa's Ego**. This might have lead to friction between **Nahusa** and the Pre-rigvedic Rishis resulting in separation between the Ruling Class and the Priestly Community.

### **Presence of Rigvedic Gods in Mitanni Kingdom**

Now, moving to the subject of **Mitanni and the Rigvedic Gods**; a treaty (about 1375 BCE) between the two ancient Rulers of the Western Asian Countries; the Hittites and Mitanni, available in form of the cuneiform inscription does exhibit presence of the names of four Rigvedic Gods in it. And those are; **Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il** (**Mitrá**); **-A-ru-na-aš-ši-il** (**Varuná**) , **In-da-ra** (**Indrah**) , **Na-ša-at-ti-ya-an-na** (**Násatyá**).

Some experts say that the **Mitanni** name would have been derived from the original Rigvedic Word “**Mitrani**”, the believer of the old God “**Mitra**”. As in the inscribed document, among the Four Rigvedic Deities, God **Mitra** comes first; God **Varuna** stands second; God **Indra** is in third place; and God **Nasatya** (a pair of **Asvin**) occupies the last position.

One possibility is that, prior to the **War of Ten Kings**, the descendants of the Five Tribes of would be following the old religion of their ancestor **Nahusa** (the believers of the **Adityas**, the Old Gods such as **Varuna**, **Mitra**, and **Aryaman** etc with Pure **Agni** worship established by “**Ila**”). But, during the period of the composition of Mandala-4, and 6, whenever the Bharatas independently defeated the members of the Five Tribes in the local wars, then the Rigvedic Priests would have occasionally forced them to participate in **Yajna** ritual and **Indra's** glorification. When the combination of king **Sudasa** and **Trtsu** defeated the combined army of the **Ten Kings** on the bank of river **Parusni** (**Mandala-7 reference**), after their defeat in the **Dasha-Rajana War**, the members of the Five Tribe would have accepted the supremacy of the philosophy of the Priests. The content of some verses of **Mandala-5** and **8**, do highlight the fact that the members of the Five Tribes; the Purus, the Anus, the Turvasas and the Yadus were present on some occasions of **Yajna** ceremony. Probably, the **Druhyus** who lived in an isolation after the war in the South-west corner of the **Sindhu Valley** (Mohenjo-Daro of Sindh Province of present-day Pakistan) would have migrated to West Asia with the **Traders**, and decided to settled in that region. In the inscription of Mitanni-Hittite treaty, the first preference has been given to god **Mitra**, which does manifest that, the Earlier God **Mitra** ( **Aditya**) was closer to their heart than, the Lately Arrived God **Indra**.

Similarly, the Old God **Varuna** would have been the Favourite Deity (Kula Devata?) of the **Anu Tribe**. Hence, in **Avestan philosophy**, **Ahura Mazda** (who carries the traits of God **Varuna** of **Rigved**) has been given the prime place than the other Rigvedic Deities (purposely defined as the **Creator of Everything**, probably just to tease the Rigvedic Priests that, their Supreme God **Indra** is far inferior to **Asura Medha/Pitre Asura**).

Above aspects can be seen in the context of the existence of “**Shaiva** and **Vaishnava**” sects as well as presence of the concept of **Different Kula-Devas** (Family Gods) in **Hindu** Religion.

The most striking difference in **Avestan Text**, and **Mitanni/Kassite documents** is that, in the former, there is no place for **Rigvedic God “Maruts”**, but in the **Kassite documents** translated from **Akkadian** language does indicate presence of “**Maruttash**” word (**Rigvedic-Maruts** found along with **Shuriash**, the term used for **God Surya** ) as the name of a **Kassite King**.

Then the fresh question crops up, **what does it show?**

**Presence of “Maruttash” word in the Kassite documents manifests that the Mitanni People were originally from the Indian Sub-continent, who still followed the Rigvedic traditions, and hence they fondly used the names of the Rigvedic Gods like Indra, Maruts, Surya etc in their documents.**

In contrast, the **Avestan People** who too had their origin in the Indian Sub-continent, but

when rebelled against the **Hardcore Rigvedic Priests**, rejected **Indra** completely, even did not include “**Maruts**” as the God in their culture, as in **Rigved**, **He** has been described as **Indra's Comrade**, but developed an independent philosophy that revolved around God **Ahura Mazda**.

#### IV. Summary :

- The main purpose of creation of **Indra** is to trounce dragon **Vritra/Drought**, when the Older Gods including **Varuna** failed to meet the challenge posed by demon **Vritra**.
- The character **Indra** comes into existence after a prolonged discussion held among the Pre-rigvedic Rishis. Actually, **Indra** is conceived through the **mind game** of the Sages/ Poets.
- Birth of **Indra** is not a smooth affair, but there is complete disorder and instability in the world, and **His** mother gives birth in a non-conventional manner, and **He** shakes everything.
- At the time of **His** birth, Old/Senior Gods move away from Him, indirectly means some people (probably, the Ruling class) are not at all happy about **His** Creation.
- Though **Indra** has necessary valour and strength to fight **Vritra**, but he regularly takes the help from the Three External Agents, namely **Soma**, **Vajra**, and **Ratha** to smite **Vritra/Ahi**.
- The Rigvedic Poets have used their lofty imagination and special word power to describe **Indra**, and **His** attributes in the best possible way to portray **Him** superior to Other Gods.
- Availability of water in sufficient quantity throughout the year in the area located to west of river **Sindhu** made the rivals to raise question about the very existence and the acts of **Indra** that ultimately led to revolt and spit in the Rigvedic Community after **Mandala-8**.
- Presence of **Indra** as a minor demon, and absence of **Maruts** in **Avesta**, clearly manifest that **Avestan People** migrated from the Rigvedic Country after the quarrel. Similarly, presence of **Indra** (as one of the Gods), and **Maruts** in **Mitanni/Kassite** inscriptions do indicate that the **Mitanni** People too had their origin in the Rigvedic territory.

#### V. References:

1. “**Rig Veda**”(Bilingual), Translated by **Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896)** in PDF format
2. **Monier-Williams Dictionary**
3. **Information on Avesta, and Mitanni/Kassite is taken from various books and articles.**

**Note: Please see Appendices “A”, and “B”**

**Hymn-Rv-2.1 dedicated to “Agni”: An Invitation to the Pre-rigvedic Deities for Yajna**

In the tabular form, the names of the Deities present with their special characteristics are placed.

Verse No.	Names of the Deity	Description
1	<b>Agni</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains three ways of birth of “<b>Agni</b>”,</li> <li>from <b>waters</b> (believing the Sun rises from the sea)</li> <li>from <b>stones</b> (due to rubbing action/friction)</li> <li>from the <b>forest plants</b> (wild fire).</li> </ul>
2	<b>Agni</b>	<b>Agni</b> - the main cause of ceremony and the real conductor of Yajna/sacrifice means the <b>leading Priest</b> , and the <b>Griha-pati</b> /master of the house as well.
3	<b>Indra, Vishnu, Brahmanaspati, and Goddess Puramdhi</b>	<b>Agni</b> has been equated with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indra</b> that depicts <b>Him</b> as the mighty bull/Hero,</li> <li><b>Vishnu</b> for unrestricted movement (mighty strides of Vishnu),</li> <li><b>Brahmanaspati</b> indicating the mastery in the spoken words,</li> <li><b>Puramdhi</b> denoting mastery in the multi-directional thoughts.</li> </ul>
4	<b>Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, and Amsha</b>	<b>Agni</b> is described as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>King <b>Varuna</b>, who laws govern the world,</li> <li><b>Mitra</b> whose company is always desirable,</li> <li><b>Aryaman</b> who is the Master of All beings,</li> <li><b>Amsha</b> who regularly shares his knowledge, that brings improvements in life.</li> </ul>
5	<b>Tvastar</b>	<b>Agni</b> as <b>Tvastar</b> to give strength to worshipper
6	<b>Rudra, Maruts, Vata, Pushan</b>	<b>Agni</b> is defined as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Rudra</b> who is <b>Asura</b> of Heaven</li> <li><b>Maruts</b> as the God who imparts life</li> <li><b>Vata</b> as the mover like red-wind (dusty/sandy air)</li> <li><b>Pushan</b> as the Protector of the Worshippers</li> </ul>
7	<b>Savitar, Bhaga</b>	<b>Agni</b> is designated as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Savitar</b> -the granter of precious items</li> <li><b>Bhaga</b>-the power of wealth</li> </ul>
10	<b>Rbhu</b>	<b>Agni</b> is compared with <b>Rbhu</b> , the craftsman
	<b>Aditi, Bharati, Ila, Saraswati</b>	<b>Agni</b> is described in the forms of four Goddesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Aditi</b>- Celestial Mother of Gods</li> <li><b>Bharati</b>- collective voice of the fire offerings</li> <li><b>Ila</b>- hundred wintered means a long lived person</li> <li><b>Saraswati</b>- who has overcome Vritra/drought</li> </ul>
13	<b>Sons of Aditi</b>	<b>Agni</b> acts as mouth for the <b>Sons of Aditi</b> at the time of <b>Yajna</b>
15	<b>Earth and Heaven</b>	<b>Agni</b> is present in both worlds; <b>Heaven</b> and <b>Earth</b>



## General Observations:

1. Though hymn **Rv-2.1** is addressed to “**Agni**”, but it contains names of several important Rigvedic Deities (Gods and Goddesses), as that of the hymns devoted to “**Visvedevas**”.
2. In the very first verse, three different ways of origin of “**Agni**” in the world have been defined. Second verse describes **Agni** as the “ **Maestro of Ceremony**”.
3. **Indra, Vishnu, Brahmanaspati** appear together in the verse-3.
4. The Poet has placed **Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman, and Amsha**; the four **Adityas** together in the verse number-4, but the special phrase, the” **Sons of Aditi**” is found in the verse-13. **Bhaga**, who is also believed to be **Aditya**, is seen in verse-7.
5. In the verse number-6, **Rudra** has been clearly identified as **Asura**. Same verse covers other two wind gods **Maruts, Vata**; and **Pushan** also.
6. Names of the four Goddesses, i.e. **Aditi, Bharati, Ila** and **Saraswati** are found together in the verse number-11. This is the only reference outside the **Ten Apri-suktas** of **Rigved**,.
7. There is no direct reference of **Soma** in the hymn, but the verse-14 does hint at the offering of Juice extracted from the plant to Gods, and its consumption by the Priests. Soma is a very special drink that makes the Deities immortal, but in the hymn **Rv-2.1**; it is not clearly identified as God.
8. The verse-15 explains that **Agni** is God of worlds, the celestial (heaven) as well as the terrestrial (Earth).

The hymn **Rv-2.1** gives proper information about the origin and the main function of God **Agni in Yajna**, and the composer of the hymn has also brought out the key attributes of the main Rigvedic Deities, e.g.- “Indra as Bull” in it. Additionally, the Poet has also portrayed them as the different forms of **Agni** ( “Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti” / “Truth is one, the wise perceive it differently” **or** God is one, the wise call him by different names) , as if, all of them are invited to attend the ritual and specifically visualized together in the form of **Agni**.

From above information, it can be safely concluded that the all the Deities mentioned in the hymn **Rv-2.1**, were already created by the Pre-rigvedic Priests. In the hymn, the Composer has defined salient feature of each Deity, which means that the Poet was fully aware about the purpose of the creation of each one of them, the same has been introduced to all of us.

Hence the said hymn is the best suited candidate for the actual start of the Rigvedic Text.

### Factuality of River Saraswati as explained by Mandala -6 Poet using symbolism

Following verse taken from **Mandala-6**, indicates the use of symbolism by the Poet to highlight indirectly, some unknown features of river **Saraswati**.

**Rv-6.49,7:** pāvīravī kanyā citrāyu ḥ sarasvatī vīrapatnī dhiya m dhāt |

ghnābhirachidra m śara ṇ a m sajo ṣ ā durādhar ṣ a m gh ṛ ṇ ate śarma ya m sat ||

# So may **Saraswati**, the **Hero's Consort**, brisk with rare life, the **lightning's Child**, inspires us,  
And, with the Dames accordant, give the singer a refuge unassailable and flawless.

Now, we shall focus our attention of the two words of the verse to understand symbolism hidden.

1. pāvīravī / पावीरवी

2. Vīrapatnī/ वीरपत्नी

1. pāvīravī / पावीरवी : As per **Monier-Williams Dictionary [2]**, its meaning is the “**Daughter of Lightning**”.

First, we shall ask a question to ourselves; **why does the Poet call river Saraswati as the “Child of Lightning”?** or **what does he want to convey through this special phrase?**

Then next question comes up; **has anyone seen an occurrence of lightning in the “clear sky”?**

Lightning naturally occurs only when the rain-clouds gather in the sky. It is generally observed either just before rain or during raining. It symbolizes the rain/ rainy season. When the Poet has described **Saraswati** as a “**Child of Lightning**”, then indirectly he wants to say that at that time, in reality, **She** was the **rain-fed river**.

2. Vīrapatnī/ वीरपत्नी : It actually means “**Wife of a Hero**”.

Somewhere, prior to the composition of the said verse, in some part of the rigvedic country, **wife of a Tribe Leader/Ruler (Virapatni)** would have taken keen interest in addressing some issues of the common people. Here, quoting the earlier example, the Poet expects from the river **Saraswati**, to come forward and take the lead in providing solution to the problems of the people who are residing on **Her** banks. It indirectly means, **She** should move forward with **rain-water as flood**, since the people living in the downstream region are eagerly waiting for **Her** arrival, where water is essential for their survival.

“It is relatively easy to question someone's answer than answering his/her question.”